

THE REHEARSAL.

1. Of the Reformed Churches abroad, which are not *Episcopal*, but yet not *Anti-Episcopal*.
2. The Plea of *Necessity* Argu'd, from *David's Eating the Shew-Bread*.
3. The *Presbyterians* a very Inconsiderable Party, in Comparison of the *Christian Church*.
4. As great Evidence for *Episcopacy* as for the *Canon of the Holy Scriptures*, or the *Articles of the Creed*.
5. The Importance of the Subject of *Episcopacy*.
6. Of Altering the *Frame of Government* Instituted by *Christ*.

SATURDAY, October 25. 1707.

Country-man. **I**N your last, *Master*, you laid it Home upon the *Conscience* of the *Dissenters*, as you vindicated your own *Innocency*, and the *Sincerity* of your *Intentions* towards them.

(1.) But ther is one Great *Clamour* they have against the *Doctrin* you have laid down, which Raises such *Prejudice* in the Minds of many, that if you cannot Remove it, all you have said will be *Ineffectual*; and tho' they cannot *Answer* you, yet they will still *Oppose* you. They say, that by your Argument all the *Foraign Reform'd Churches* which have not *Bishops* are *Un-Church'd*, and put out of the *Fold of CHRIST's Flock*. Which is so very *Uncharitable*, and of such *Dangerous Consequence* to the *Reformation*, that if you shou'd bring a Thousand *Demonstrations* to Support it, they will not Receive it.

Rehearsal. I have spoke before of the *Reform'd Churches* abroad which are not *Episcopal*, and yet are not *Anti-Episcopal*, that is, whose *Principles* are not against *Episcopacy*; but their *Circumstances*, the frame of the *Civil Government* where they are, and other *Necessities* they lie under, they say, hinders them from having it. But that they highly Approve it, and wish they might have it. As I have shew'd from *Calvin*, and others of the first *Reformers*, and from the *Church and University of Geneva* at this Day. Who *Condemn* our *Dissenters*, and even *Anathematize* them, for setting up against *Episcopacy*, and making a *Separation* in *England* from it.

(2.) Now if the *Necessity* of these *Foraign Churches* be Really and Truly as they Pretend, which they must know better than we, great *Allomance* will be made for the Case of *Necessity*, as of *David's eating the Shew-Bread*, which otherwise had been *Presumptions* in him, and a *Sin*. And the Countenance which our *Dissenters* Plead from

these *Foraign Churches*, is the same as if from this Example of *David* others shou'd have set up a Principle, that the *Shew-Bread* was no more *Hallow'd* than any other *Bread*, and that it was *Lawful* for any, and without any *Necessity*, to Profane the *Temple*, and Eat of that *Bread* which it was not *Lawful* to Eat, but for the *Priests* only. Is it not the same, that from a *Necessity*, pleaded in *Geneva* &c. our *Dissenters*, without any *Necessity*, Renounce and Disown *Episcopacy* in it self, and for *Episcopacy* sake?

(3.) But now to put the Case to the utmost Extremity, suppose these *Reform'd Churches* shou'd, like our *Dissenters*, give up the Plea of *Necessity*, and stand it out against *Episcopacy* upon a Principle, as *Un-Scriptural*, as an *Up-turpation*, and Consequently as *Anti-Christian*. Put the Case thus, and what wou'd be the *Consequence*? Must the Demonstration of *Episcopacy* from the Beginning fall to the Ground, because so Many had Departed from it, in these later Ages? Must all the *Churches* in the *World* be given up in favour of the *Calvinists*? For that is the Case. All others are *Episcopal*, and ever have been so. And what Proportion do's the *Calvinist Church* bear to all the *Churches* in the *Christian World*? Not so much as a *Mole-Hill* to a *Mountain*. Which then must give Place? Wou'd you throw down a *Mountain* to make Room for a *Mole-Hill*? Wou'd you throw down all *Antiquity*, to make Room for a very *Modern Novelty*? Wou'd you Reject the Example of the first 1500 years, to Countenance a late *Upstart* in the two last *Centuries*? If so, let us have a Care how we can Defend the *Creed*, the *Authority* of the *Holy Scriptures*, or any *Article* of the *Christian Faith*? For do we Believe them any otherwise than as Handed down to us all the way from *Christ* and his *Apostles*, as the *Doctrin* which was once *Deliver'd* to the *Saints*!

(4.)

(4.) Country-m. But you wou'd not put the *Faith* and the *Doctrine* of *Christ*, upon the same Level with *Episcopacy*?

Rehears. Whatever the *Importance* of the one or the other may be; the *Evidence* for them is, the same. And in one Point stronger for *Episcopacy*, as being Matter of *Government*, which is more Obvious to the Notice of men, and any *Change* or *Alteration* in it, more *Observable* than in *Doctrines* or *Opinions*. Tho' as I told you before, *Doctrines* may become *Facts*, and Proveable the same way; as it is now a Matter of *Fact*, whether such and such *Doctrines* are Profess'd in the *Church* of *England*, what *Books* are in the *Canon* of the *Holy Scriptures* allow'd by her, &c. And thus the *Faith* and *Christian Doctrine* is Prov'd throughout all the *Ages* since *Christ*. We see what the *Faith* was which was all along Profess'd in the *Church*. And thus we Detect the Novel *Doctrines* of *Rome*, and of the *Sectaries* among us.

(5.) Thus much as to the *Evidence* of *Episcopacy*. But now as to the *Importance* of it. There is nothing of more *Importance* to any *Society* than *Government*. It is *Necessary*, and of the very *Essence* of a *Society*, without which no Number of Men cou'd be a *Society*. Therefore *Government* is *Absolutely Necessary*, and the most of any other thing, to the *Church*, as a *Church*, that is, as a *Society*. And the *Preservation* of the *Faith* and *Doctrine* of the *Church*, depends, under *God*, most Chiefly in the *Support* of the *Government* of the *Church*, that is, in supporting her as a *Society*. Whence she is call'd in *Scripture* the *Pillar* and *Ground* of the *Truth*. And where her *Disciplin* fails, ther is an open Door for all *Errors* and *Heresies* to Creep in, as the Experience of our own as well as of former *Ages* has Instructed us. And as it is in all other *Governments*, the *Laws* lose their force, and are forgotten, where the Power of the *Governors* is Cramp'd and Over-Aw'd.

(6.) Country-m. But the *Dissenters* have *Government* in what they call their *Churches*, for they are *Societies*, and, as you say, every *Society* must have *Government*.

Rehears. As every *Society* must have *Government*, so no *Society* or *Corporation* can have any other than what is Prescrib'd to them by their *Charter*, Granted to them by the first *Institutor* and *Founder* of their *Corporation*.

Suppose a *Mobb* shou'd Rise up in *London*, and Suppose some of the *Common-Council* or *Aldermen* shou'd Join with them, and they shou'd make a new *Regulation* of their *Charter*, and instead of One *Lord Mayor* shou'd set up Ten, and make a new Division of their *Wards*, and set over them whom they pleas'd; and if this shou'd Prevail for many years together, wou'd all this make them a *Lawful Government*? Might not the *King* justly bring a *Quo Warranto*

against such a *Corporation*, who Acted from no *Authority* but their own, and had Quite Alter'd, that is, Annull'd the *Charter* he had given them? For all *Authority* must be Deriv'd from some *Superior*, till we come to *God himself*; from whom all *Authority* in *Heaven* and *Earth* is Deriv'd. All other *Authority* is *Rebellion* against *God*, and *Usurping* of his *Prerogative*.

If *Korah* had Prevail'd against *Aaron* ther had been *Government* still, and it had been only Changing the *Object*, that *Korah* had been the *High-Priest* instead of *Aaron*; and who knows but he was as Capable of it as *Aaron*, and as Good a *Man*, bating his *Rebellion*? But you see how *God* Judg'd this Case, and that it was over-turning all *Government* by taking it off its true *Foundation* and *Basis*, as being Deriv'd from *God*, and Subsisting upon *His Authority*.

Country-m. This indeed is a Parallel Case to that of *Presbyters* throwing off their *Bishops*, and setting up a New *Government* and a new *Regulation* of their own. And by the same Rule that they Broke off from their *Bishops*, others Broke off from them, and wou'd have neither *Bishops* nor *Presbyters*, but every *Man*, *Woman* and *Child* took upon them the *Sacred Office*, and thought it no *Usurpation*!

Rehears. The *Priests* of *Jeroboam* had *God* *vernment*. And they were *Ten* to *Two* of the *Tribes*. Yet the *Ten* were the *Schismatics*, because they did it in Opposition to that *Priesthood* which *God* had Ordained. So that we are not to Reckon the *Truth* by *Numbers*. Else *Mahomet* wou'd have the Better of *Christianity*. But thank *God* the *Presbyterians* have not yet that Argument to Bragg of.

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